

Las Vegas: the reinvention of Sin City as a sustainable city

The Las Vegas strip¹, home to the world's best known casinos where wastefulness is not just encouraged but is a key part of the business model, has been reinventing itself over the past few years as a model of sustainability. But is it really possible for the infamous strip, that according to legend is so lit up it can be seen from outer space, ever be truly green?

Las Vegas (Spanish for "the meadows"²) was founded as a city in 1905 because, ironically, the cluster³ of water springs in an area that was mostly desert made it an ideal rest and refuelling stop. But this water supply which was more than adequate to support the 800 residents that lived in Las Vegas just over a century ago soon dried up when the gaming industry caused the population to explode.

Now the city is struggling to meet the water and energy demands⁴ of its over 500,000 citizens, never mind the 40 million tourists who visit the city every year, most of whom come to enjoy the Strip's excesses [...].

According to Gwen Migita, VP of sustainability at Caesars, one of the oldest resorts⁵ on the strip, water conservation is one of the core elements of their Code Green environmental strategy. Some of the innovations include installing aerators in the sink⁶ and shower heads⁷ to minimise water flow and low flush toilets⁸ that use just 1.28 gallons per flush compared to the standard 1.6 gallons [...].

Another area in which the casinos are attempting to reduce their rather deep set carbon footprint is by finding ways to recycle and repurpose waste. The casinos generate

nearly 500,000 tons of waste a year most of which until fairly recently went straight to landfills. But now most casinos have back of house sorting efforts in place to recover some of this waste.

Plastic, paper and aluminium products are retrieved from the rubbish and compacted into bales⁹ which are then sold on the open market. Food waste is either sent to a nearby pig farm or composted. The oil that is used in cooking is collected and sold on to be converted into biofuel.

[...] When people go to Vegas they tend to be more focused on vice than virtue. It remains to be seen if the casinos' back end efforts will be enough to make that vice sustainable.

Sadhbh Walshe, theguardian.com,
April 25th 2013.

1. The Strip = name given to the long road crossing Las Vegas. Many of the largest hotels, casinos, and resort properties in the world are located there. 2. meadows: *prairies* 3. cluster = group 4. meet the demand: *répondre à la demande* 5. resort = hotel 6. sink: *évier, lavabo* 7. shower head: *pomme de douche* 8. low flush toilet: *chasse deau basse consommation* 9. bales: *balles, ballots*

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1. What does it deal with ?
2. What type of document is it ? Where does it come from ? When was it published ?
3. Explain what is at stake and give examples, using the document.

4. Conclude :

Recap the main idea(s) and give your personal opinion about the document and the question raised. Use your personal experience if possible.

